

# SEATTLE DOWNTOWN PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES TASK FORCE

## TASK FORCE MEETING #8 SUMMARY: JULY 29, 2005

### Task Force Members

Ken Bounds, Co-chair  
Kate Joncas, Co-chair (absent)  
Catherine Stanford, Co-chair  
Bruce Bentley (absent)  
B. J. Brooks  
David Brewster  
Tina Bueche  
Jordan Royer (absent)  
Ron Sher

### Parks & Rec/MID Staff

Christopher Williams  
Eric Friedli  
Kevin Bergsrud  
Cheryl Fraser  
Peggy Shapiro  
Greg Bucasas

### Citizens

Fred Kay

### Consultants

Bonnie Berk  
Michael Regnier

### **Welcome and Announcements**

Ken Bounds opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Bonnie Berk reviewed the meeting agenda.

### **Vision Statement for Seattle's Downtown Parks: Draft #1**

Bonnie reviewed a rough draft of a downtown parks vision statement:

Seattle's downtown parks will be vibrant, convivial, people-filled gathering spaces reflecting the City's diversity, urban character and environmental values. They should be individually distinctive yet part of a well-integrated system of open spaces and recreational places that are well-loved and well-cared for, and support a rich tapestry of uses. They should be fun, beautiful, and restorative places in all four seasons, day and night.

Task Force members brainstormed additional ideas to incorporate:

Downtown parks are everybody's parks.

They should create a comfortable respite in one's travels and a place to pause and reflect.

Downtown parks are unique as a set of parks in the system and need to be treated differently; they need to operate under a different set of guiding principles.

What makes downtown parks different?

- They serve a diverse set of people and interests
- They are visitor-friendly and play a role in the City's tourism system
- They are part of the network of a great city – they connect and enhance the City
- They are places of culture and intellectual sophistication – a downtown park serves as a stage for a City's intellectual and cultural excitement

A good downtown park will have at least ten things happening, going on  
They are thick with activity and interest – they are urban places!

Parks need to be connectors, and relate to the places around them.

There should be a particular connection to the surrounding neighborhood, reflecting its history and character.

Should connect to nature and the landscape around them

We should approach each park in the context of its context!

They can be a series of outdoor rooms – offering something to everyone

Thriving urban parks are sociable places, places to meet and connect with people

Social life flows right into park spaces. They are places to meet neighbors, do work, rest and be contemplative.

They are “third places” – not home, not work

They can operate as a set of small events and larger ones too

Since Seattle doesn't have one big downtown park, we especially need to think carefully about how to manage them, to make the most of their assets and opportunities.

Civility and respect are important. Parks need to be civil places where people treat each other with respect and treat the parks with respect.

### **Downtown Parks Category Definitions**

Bonnie presented draft definitions of the three previously-identified categories of downtown parks. The Task Force re-named the first tier “Downtown Destination Parks” instead of “Downtown Community Parks.” The third tier was re-named “Small Public Spaces” instead of “Public Squares.” The definitions, with revised labels:

*Downtown Destination Parks:* parks of interest to the broad community that could become destination places for the whole city as well as gathering spaces for the downtown. These parks are the city's most underutilized park assets, and present opportunities for communitywide activities, including partnerships between downtown residents, businesses and the City.

*Downtown Neighborhood Parks:* neighborhood-focused parks appropriate for neighborhood involvement in programming, including partnerships between the City and neighborhoods.

*Small Public Spaces* (managed by the Parks Dept): attractive public respite spaces, “beauty spots,” providing opportunities to enhance downtown's character, enjoyment, vitality and identity.

### **Parks-Specific Visions for Downtown Destination Parks**

Task Force members brainstormed about the desired character/niche of 4 of the 9 downtown Downtown Destination Parks.

#### *Westlake Park*

A central gather space in the heart of the retail core, a piazza for all ages

A safe, kid-friendly, comfortable place for lots of activities and programs:

Tables and chairs, benches for resting, reading

A place to park bicycles and safely leave packages

Music and street performers

Interesting things to read or activities to participate in

The carousel in winter  
Water features to enjoy and provide interest  
Vendors selling street art

#### *Occidental Park*

A funky, grassroots place for gathering and enjoying urban amenities, programs  
Arts, crafts, music, literature, and history-related programs  
Performance art and hip hop poets

Changes and new opportunities:  
Build on and integrate the trolley barn's new location nearby

#### *Freeway Park*

A public garden where people go for beauty, quiet, contemplation and to enjoy nature  
A large site that could connect between the City's office core and surrounding residential areas  
With 5.5 acres, there is room for lots of things in this park:  
Walking  
"Summer in the park" activities – trike races, used book sales, others  
Smooth jazz performances

Needs and opportunities:  
A clearer sense of the landscaping plan – is it Northwest or ornamental or a hybrid?  
Enhanced support from surrounding businesses and organizations that benefit from its amenities

#### *Myrtle Edwards Park*

An exercise and special events park that's open 24 hours a day – the Greenlake Park for downtown  
A safe place to walk, jog, bicycle and more:  
A parcourse (cardio/stretching stations) arranged around the park  
Volleyball nets  
Improved wayfinding  
More family-friendly amenities, including places for picnicking, barbecuing

Changes and new opportunities:  
Increased accessibility with the new pedestrian bridge  
Improved connectivity with downtown would make the park still more accessible  
Integrate with and complement the new Sculpture Park  
Increased shoreline access with the opening of the Sculpture Park  
Work with Amgen to celebrate the bridge connecting to the Park

**Guidance on McGraw Square**

Christopher Williams reported that Parks staff are ready to take action on McGraw Square, including clean-up, ivy removal, beautification of the planter, and approaching the Westin for support. The Task Force voiced its approval.

**Future Meeting Items**

Several Task Force members raised the question of when and how the Task Force's work will include outreach with neighborhood groups and the public. Ken said Parks staff will generate a plan for the Task Force to review.

David Brewster requested that the Co-chairs present their ideas about the desired outcome of the Task Force process at a future meeting.

**Next Meetings**

The next meetings are scheduled as follows:

Friday, August 19	8:00am
Friday, September 9	8:00am
Friday, September 23	8:00am
Friday, September 30	8:00am

All meetings take place in the Boards & Commissions Conference Room on Level 2 at City Hall.